



ISIS Denies Responsibility for Deadly Attack in Sinai Peninsula

November 28, 2017

- ▶ On November 26, 2017, ISIS's al-Haq News Agency issued a three-minute video in English in which it claimed **ISIS's Sinai Province denied all connection to the attack on the Sufi mosque in the northern Sinai Peninsula**. According to the video, most of those killed were from the al-Sawarka tribe, many of whom belong to ISIS. In addition, a group of Sufis (a mystical trend in Islam) was allegedly detained in the past by ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula but later released. The video calls on the Sufis to learn the concept of *tawhid* (the unity of Allah) from ISIS and oppose polytheists.
- ▶ The video accuses the Egyptian army of using the attack to draw the al-Sawarka tribe into fighting against ISIS. It accused Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of wanting to make the al-Sawarka tribe think ISIS had killed members of the tribe (Haq, November 26, 2017¹).



A scene from the ISIS video denying the attack: "The Islamic State's Sinai Province denies responsibility for the attack on the al-Rawda mosque in Sinai..." (Haq, November 26, 2017).

Evaluation

- ▶ In ITIC assessment, ISIS's **denial of responsibility** for the deadly attack on the al-Rawda mosque, and its accusations against the Egyptian army and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah

¹ The video includes news material and sections from previous ISIS videos. It is in English with Arabic subtitles. The sound track indicates it was spoken by a computer program, another indication of the problems ISIS has been having recently with its propaganda machine.

el-Sisi, **are lies**. The attack on the mosque, which was carried out by between 25 and 30 operatives driving five ATVs, **demanding a high level of operational capability and complexity, which is characteristic exclusively of ISIS's Sinai Province**. According to reports in the Egyptian media and an announcement from the Egyptian attorney general, the terrorists who carried out the attack **waved ISIS flags**. Choosing to attack Sufi Muslims would be **in character** for ISIS. **ISIS considers Sufis as "infidels"** and according to reports, in the past the Sufis supported the Egyptian security forces.

In recent months ISIS's Sinai Province **increased the force and complexity of its activities**. In ITIC assessment, at the present time **the Sinai Province – and ISIS's other provinces abroad – are especially interested in carrying out showcase attacks to prove they are still a force to be reckoned with**. In addition to the attack in Egypt, ISIS has recently carried out deadly showcase attacks in other provinces (in Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan). They indicate that **the operational capabilities and motivation in ISIS's various provinces are still strong, even after the collapse of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq**.